



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission

MEETING MINUTES

April 12, 2011 | 7:30 p.m.

Attendance

Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Commissioners: Daphne Collins (Chair), Chris Steele (Vice Chair), Jack Leader (Secretary), Charles Eisenberg, Jane Ives, Ronald Lipof, Joyce Moss, Philip Plottel, Darryl Settles

Candace Havens
Director
Planning & Development

Staff: Amanda Stout

Guests: Ald. Vicki Danberg, Ald. Stephen Linsky, Barry Abramson, David Abromowitz, Bill Renke,

Absent: Matthew Cuddy, Robert Gifford, Peter Kai Jung Lew, John Pears,

Amanda Stout
Senior Economic
Development Planner

Agenda Items

1. EDC Business

- Introductions – Mayor Warren recently appointed Barry Abramson and David Abromowitz as new members of the EDC, pending approval of the Board of Aldermen. Barry and David briefly introduced themselves.

- Vote on March 8, 2011 Minutes – Collins had a small revision to the minutes. Motion to approve (8-0) (Eisenberg, seconded by Lipof; Settles arrived after vote)

Commissioners

Daphne Collins, Chair
Christopher Steele,
Vice Chair
Jack Leader, Secretary

2. EDC Guidelines and Policy for Project Review

- Amanda Stout informed the EDC of a prospective development project that would like to come before the EDC for review: a new Sovereign Bank location at 624 Washington Street. The group discussed its general role in project review: that the Commission is advisory; they want to be supportive of business in general, but not a rubber stamp for all development; and that they welcome the task of reviewing projects so that they can provide guidance both to the Board of Aldermen and to the applicant. It is unclear what proportion of special permit cases the EDC currently reviews and what weight their opinion carries, but they want to continue to further a mission of expanding the commercial base.

- The Commission reviewed the “Guidelines for Addressing the Newton Economic Development Commission” that were written in October 2010 and decided to make revisions to make it more user friendly and to reiterate the above points. Chris Steele will revise before the May meeting.

Matthew Cuddy
Charles Eisenberg
Robert Gifford
Jane Ives
Peter Kai Jung Lew
Ronald Lipof
Joyce Moss
John R.A. Pears
Philip Plottel
Darryl Settles

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3. Project Updates

- a) **Strategy for a Business Improvement District (BID) in Newton Centre** - Continuing the discussion from past meetings, the Commission discussed the merits of having conversations with property owners and with business owners about a BID and possible next steps.
- b) **Needham Street** - Amanda Stout informed the EDC that the next step of the master planning process will be a community visioning meeting on April 14th and urged members to attend.
- c) **Austin Street JAPG** - Jack Leader updated the EDC on the Austin Street Joint Advisory Planning Group that meets every other week for 90 days to discuss development on this site in Newtonville. Leader chairs the JAPG and wants to bring a focus on the commercial potential of the site, as well as its residential potential.
- d) **CDBG Letter** - Daphne Collins is drafting a letter in support of continued funding at the federal level for the Community Development Block Grant program.
- e) **EDSAT** - Amanda Stout will keep the EDC informed of progress and next steps on the Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool.
- f) **Financial Model** – Chris Steele met with several members of the Planning staff to discuss the Financial Model that was developed in conjunction with the Firefighters’ Triangle study. It was requested that Chris review the model again at a future EDC meeting.
- g) **Firefighters Triangle** – As the City moves forward with related studies for fire stations, the EDC discussed ways to wrap up this feasibility study. Philip Plottel will draft a brief summary of the project and will circulate it for review.
- h) **Mayor’s Mixed-Use Task Force** – Joyce Moss updated the group on the March 17th public workshop.
- i) **Community Parking Permit Program** – Amanda Stout informed the group that the Parking Permit program (whereby businesses could purchase a reserved space in certain parking lots for a flat annual fee) had been cancelled by the Board of Aldermen. There were several questions raised about the program, and the EDC continues to be interested in parking policies in village centers.

12. New Business: Regional Economic Development, Clean Energy, Bio-tech

- Chris Steele, Daphne Collins, and Amanda Stout discussed a possible new role for the EDC involving helping the City to understand its development potential and cultivate new economic development opportunities, particularly in the areas of bio-tech and clean/green energy. This work would be an outgrowth of the EDSAT study, involve talking with our neighboring cities and towns, include discussions with the Commonwealth and interest groups (e.g. MassBio), and support existing work of the Planning Department. Steele reminded the Commission that the State Legislature recently authorized the creation of regional economic development councils and suggested that this is an opportunity for Newton to work with our neighbors. There will be further discussion on the role that the EDC can play in assisting City staff and the Mayor on these efforts, including data gathering, outreach, visioning, talking with property owners, and making policy recommendations.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Stout, AICP

Sr. Economic Development Planner